

**City Council of the Mayor and Council of New Castle
Joint Workshop Session with the Planning Commission
Town Hall – 201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Tuesday – January 19, 2010 – 5:30 p.m.**

Present:

City Council

Council President William Barthel
Councilperson John Cochran
Councilperson John Gaworski
Councilperson Ted Megginson
Councilperson Teel Petty

Planning Commission

David Bird, chair
Bill Simpson, co-chair
Joe DiAngelo
Florence Smith
Dorsey Fiske
Vera Worthy
Dan Knox

Absent: Jack Norsworthy

Also present:

Mayor Jack Klingmeyer, Administrator Cathryn Thomas, Planning Consultant Marian Hull

1. Discussion of Comprehensive Plan Implementation to develop proposed changes to the City Code and Zoning Maps; and in particular focusing on the Land Use Plan and Recommended Land Use Goals Nos. 1 through 3.

President Barthel said this is the beginning of the process. The goal is to get this done in six to eight months.

Ms. Marian Hull said the main elements of what will be looked at are the Ferry Cut-off area and the area of Seventh and South Streets. The City will also be looking at permitted uses in General Commercial areas and what areas are appropriate for churches. The zoning amendment process will be evaluated, which the City Code does not provide much guidance.

The final element of the zoning project is to look at the creation of environmental protection overlay districts (EPODs).

Ms. Hull gave an overview of the goals and major strategies. The first is continuing to encourage mixed-used residential/retail/office uses. The second goal is developing the remaining undeveloped parcels, brownfields and redevelopment of areas harmoniously with nearby land uses. The third goal is to develop and adopt long-term redevelopment vision plans for the Ferry Cut-off and the area of 7th and South Streets. She discussed strategies for each area.

Chairman Bird said one item on the next Planning Commission meeting is an update from DeIDOT.

Ferry Cut-off Area

Ms. Hull outlined some features of the area. The area is a major gateway to the City. The area behind the medical buildings appears to be operating as a wetland.

Mayor Klingmeyer pointed out that this area was the former City dump that was filled in.

Ms. Hull said the area includes former industrial properties, auto dealerships, Trustee lands and others. The comprehensive plan recommended the whole area being rezoned to mixed use.

Councilperson Cochran asked about the impact on this area of the proposed National Park.

President Barthel said we will be working with them.

Mayor Klingmeyer said the federal officials will need to match up with the City's plans.

A discussion was held about the Parks Services interest in the area and the current status of the park.

Ms. Hull brought the discussion to the boundaries of the rezoning of the area. Her thoughts were to exclude the St. Peter's property. Across the street, the two corners are two gateways to the City. The City might want to consider looking at those areas. Another area to look at is the area near the medical office buildings.

Administrator Thomas said what Ms. Hull is talking about is a new zoning designation, with a full set of development standards.

Seventh and South Streets

Discussion was held on boundaries for this area. Ms. Hull brought attention to expansion to the south to include all areas that are to be mixed use. The area includes a current proposal for a new church to be constructed. The boundaries are not carved in stone and can be expanded.

Ms. Hull proposed considering a minimum and maximum percentage level of uses in a mixed-use area. Without percentages, you get whatever is hot in development. She also raised looking at the intensity of development.

A discussion was held on looking at examples in other areas and guidelines from organizations. For the upcoming community meeting, some options and examples will be shown.

Mayor Klingmeyer suggested looking at river and waterfront development. Councilperson Cochran agreed with including some items for the river area.

Members of the Council and Planning Commission expressed the need to look at density and traffic, both within development areas and flowing out into main roads.

Other Zoning Issues

Ms. Hull said there is very little General Commercial zoning in the City, chiefly the Farmer's Market. She proposed to remove uses in General Commercial that do not typically belong in Highway Commercial, such as single-family residential. She also would like to tweak the districts where churches are allowed.

Ms. Hull has talked with the City Solicitor about changes to the zoning amendment process. She would like to give the Planning Commission the authority to request studies and additional information during the approval process. She would also like to add a step to the City's process that would have an application for zoning amendment go first to City Council for its recommendation to the Planning Commission. That would make City Council aware of requests and give it an opportunity to raise any issues it might have. It is a referral tool and legally permissible in Delaware.

Administrator Thomas concurred that the process Ms. Hull described is commonly used by local governments and her experience had been that this was a useful procedure, having City Council conduct the initial review.

EPODs

Ms. Hull talked about the need for environmental protection overlay districts. Right now the City itself does not have control in environmentally important and sensitive areas. The districts would set up standards for development to protect resources and provide the ability to transfer density.

Administrator Thomas said EPODs also protect woodlots. They are overlayed over the existing zoning map.

A decision was made to hold the Community Meeting at 7 p.m. on March 16 at the Middle School or the Senior Center.

The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Dickinson
City Clerk